

MORRIS BESET WITH POLITICAL VENDETTAS AND DISRESPECT

As a 14-year Morris resident and a longtime volunteer, I never have felt so disheartened or disappointed than I do with the situation concerning the Fire Department. The political vendetta displayed by some is beyond belief, and the level of disrespect shown toward our elected leaders is something I never thought I would see from people I once held in high esteem. What happened to respectfully agreeing to disagree? The anger demonstrated by members of the Morris Volunteer Fire Department is shocking. The lawn signs that have popped up around town are embarrassing. Adults shouldn't behave this way; this is not what we teach our children.

I have closely followed this issue between the town and the MVFD. I volunteered my time to serve on the advisory committee organized to help the town and the MVFD work toward a mutually agreeable solution for the townspeople — until it became clear that the MVFD does not wish to resolve this issue. I would venture a guess that it endeavors to keep the hostility going until the next municipal election, since politics is what caused it to create the problem in the first place.

The way Fire Chief Joel Skilton speaks to elected First Selectman Thomas Weik is unprecedented. His level of hostility makes it impossible for anyone to have a rational conversation with him about a resolution.

The MVFD was presented the opportunity to get the ambulance back to Morris after it gave the ambulance up last spring; it declined. The chief stated multiple times that the MVFD is not interested in getting the ambulance service back to Morris, yet it used the issue in a Facebook post to play politics in an attempt get the proposed budget defeated.

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Letters may be emailed to opinion@rep-am.com

As members of the advisory committee, we volunteered our free time, away from work and business, but it was made abundantly clear in the first five minutes of the last meeting that this committee is a joke to the Fire Department leadership. We repeatedly asked for information to determine the department's current standing and garner some ideas for moving forward, but were met with resistance every time. The MVFD continually refuses to demonstrate any level of transparency and has refused to provide simple documents (membership rosters) and more documents (accounting of town and/or revenue recovery funds) to the town.

The issue between the town and the MVFD is not about us, the people of Morris. It is dirty politics. It is about how much grief they can bring to the first selectman's office. It is about egos that have eclipsed the reasons for volunteerism.

Something needs to be done, and now. The rift is too great to repair, and trust has been severely broken — the townspeople have lost trust. At this point, it appears we do not even have enough members to make a viable fire department. Although I appreciate the years of volunteerism the membership has dedicated to the community, perhaps it is time to start fresh with new MVFD leadership.

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The writer is chairman of the Planning & Zoning Commission.